The Offer

Chapter 25

Madison stayed glued to the door, her back pressed flat against the cold wood like she could still back away and melt straight into the wall.

Her heart hammered so hard she could hear it throbbing in her temples, an erratic drumbeat that dragged every second down heavier than the last. She stared at Alan, waiting, almost praying he'd burst out laughing and tell her it was all some stupid joke cooked up by the booze and exhaustion. But he didn't laugh.

He dropped his gaze for a split second, cheeks flushed with plain embarrassment, then lifted his head again. His voice came out low, almost robotic, like he was reciting something he'd rehearsed alone in the dark.

"I still blame myself, Madi... I keep thinking about that night. What happened... you, completely naked... it haunts me."



Madison's cry slipped out small and sharp, almost a strangled gasp.

She slapped a hand over her mouth, eyes wide, a hot flush burning across her cheeks.

“No… no, Alan, that’s… fuck, that’s total bullshit!”

Her voice shook, caught between raw shock and pure panic.

She shook her head, trying to bat the words away like a buzzing fly, but they just hung there in the thick air between them.

Alan swallowed hard, throat tight. He kept going, voice dropping lower, rougher, each word costing him but impossible to hold back.

“Yeah… I’m so fucking ashamed. I feel guilty as hell.”

The word “hell” hit Madison like a fist to the stomach. She froze.



Yesterday’s text slammed back into her face, raw and acidic—that desperate message about not deserving to exist anymore, about wanting to throw everything away. Her breathing quickened, coming in jagged bursts.

“Jesus Christ, Alan… you can’t… why the hell are you telling me this? I don’t want to know!”

She fumbled for words, hands trembling against the door, heart spiraling into full panic. The room seemed to shrink around them, the air thick with a clammy tension that clung to their skin. Someone rattled the handle from outside.

The lock clicked. Madison leaned harder into the wood, bracing with all her weight.

“It’s occupied!” she called, voice too high, too sharp.

Behind the door a girl burst into a sloppy, drunken laugh.

“Yeah, yeah… save it for us when you’re done fucking, alright?”

The silence that followed was worse than anything. Madison felt her cheeks burn hotter, the shameful heat sliding down her neck.

Alan stiffened, eyes flicking to the floor for a second, then locking back on her. Really locking on.

His gaze dragged over her slowly, hungrily, like he couldn’t stop himself anymore—over the way her chest rose and fell too fast under the thin fabric of her top, over the tight curve of her hips molded by the denim skirt.

Madison felt it like an electric jolt, a shiver of pure unease ripping through her.

“Alan! Stop it, for fuck’s sake! Get a hold of yourself… what the hell are you saying?”

Her voice cracked, still thick with embarrassment, but she didn’t move. She stayed pinned to the door, lost in that stare that no longer felt like it belonged to her. Alan sank slowly to his knees in front of her, knees hitting the worn parquet.

He looked up, eyes pleading, almost shattered.

“I’m sorry… I really am. But those images are burned into me, Madi. I dream about you every night… and it makes me sick to my stomach.”



He paused, voice dropping to a hoarse whisper.

“I remember how wet you were that night…”

Madison let out a muffled shriek, high-pitched and shocked.

“Wh-what? Huh? No way! That’s…”

The words died in her throat. She wanted to deny it, to scream that it wasn’t true, but the truth sat there, sticky and impossible to push away.

She knew it. Her body had betrayed her that night, and hearing it spill from his mouth left her completely lost, drowning in a gut-twisting shame that knotted her insides.

She was trapped in this impossible spot: Alan looked genuinely tormented, sincerely tortured by what he was confessing, and yet… she could feel the heavy weight of his gaze, that raw hunger he could no longer hide, and it made her queasy with discomfort.



She was utterly disoriented, embarrassed straight to the bone, her heart pounding so hard she was terrified he could hear it.

Madison sat on the edge of the bed, the mattress dipping under her weight with a soft creak. She drew in a deep breath, hands clenched tight on her thighs like she needed something solid to anchor her body. Her voice came out fragile, almost robotic, the kind of effort it took to claw back some control.

“Alan… it’ll pass. This whole thing is ridiculous. Seriously. We… we’ll just forget it ever happened.”

But inside, it was pure chaos. What the fuck is wrong with him? she thought, brain

boiling over. How can he even be thinking about that? About me like that?

The shock slammed into her full force, a cold wave that tightened her throat. She was scrambling to calm him, to talk him down, words tripping over each other in her head before they even made it out. That's why he's been acting so weird… the way he looked at me, the way he touched me…

The memories crashed in hard and ugly: his eyes sliding over her in the car, his hand on the small of her back at the party entrance, that caress on her thigh that lingered one second too long.

She was quietly panicking, heart pounding so loud she was scared he could hear it. Alan didn't stop. He stayed on his knees in front of her, voice low and cracked, but the words kept spilling out like they had to escape no matter what.

"That night… I almost fucked you for real, Madi. Your mouth… then your body… and when I came all over you…"

"STOP!"



Madison's shout cracked through the room, raw and breathless. She thrust up a trembling hand, eyes wide, face burning hot.

"Shut up! Just shut the fuck up, Alan, goddammit!"

She was at her limit, sick to her stomach, guts twisted with a shame that made her want to puke. Alan finally fell silent, head bowed, leaving her to stew in the heavy quiet. Madison hated herself now, thoughts swirling like slow poison.

It's my fault… I never should've talked to that crazy bitch again. Never should've taken that fucking money.

She sucked in another shaky breath, trying to grab onto anything solid.

"Alan… listen. It's… it's not your fault. We never should've done it. I should've listened to you, I shouldn't have gone. All of this… we'll forget it fast, okay? None of it's real.

It's… p-p-post-traumatic or whatever the hell! It doesn't make sense, it's bullshit… We—we shouldn't… I mean, you shouldn't…"



The words stumbled out, a slip that escaped before she could catch it—she was talking about herself as much as him, an accidental confession that betrayed the secret turmoil rising inside her too.

She was completely lost, embarrassed to the core, and Alan, still kneeling there, said nothing more. He just let her spin in it, the weight of his confessions hanging between them like thick smoke.

Alan sat down beside her on the bed. Madison gave a slight start, an instinctive little twitch of her body, but she said nothing. She stayed right there, frozen, hands still clenched tight on her thighs. Alan started apologizing, his voice low and rough, almost broken.

“Madi… I’m sorry. I really am. I don’t know what’s happening to me…”

He moved closer, arms opening in a hesitant, almost pleading gesture, before gently pulling her against him.

By reflex, she let him. Her own arms wrapped around him, holding him softly, a fake calm that felt too forced, as if this contact could somehow still fix everything.

She murmured against his shoulder, her voice a little too steady to be real: “It’s okay… it’ll be fine, Alan.”

Inside, Alan felt like absolute shit. He had just rolled out his plan exactly as intended, and he’d made Madi feel like hell—he could see it in the rigid tension of her back, in the way she was trembling against him despite the hug. Still, there was one last thing he had to do.

Beca’s words came rushing back to him, clear and cold, like an order etched into his brain from that morning in her apartment, her vicious voice still echoing in his skull: “And at the end, you take her in your arms while apologizing… and you touch her, like it’s just a reflex. The second she feels your hand, she’ll pull away in panic and you’ll be done for the night, okay?”

He repeated it to himself on loop, the words spinning like a toxic mantra in his head.

He had to do it. He convinced himself he was just going to touch her, that she’d react sharply, push him away horrified, and it would all end there—a calculated move, one final step before he could finally breathe again.

His hand slid onto her thigh then, fingers turned inward, brushing against the warm skin through the black tights.

The thin fabric felt soft, almost silky under his palm, and he immediately felt the heat of her flesh radiating through it, alive and intense, as if his hand was already burning.

Fuck, he thought fleetingly, heart hammering in his throat.

Even he felt like he'd gone a bit too far in that moment. Guilt twisted in his gut, sharp and sticky, but he kept going, his hand trembling, fingers pressing just hard enough to feel the soft, firm muscle beneath the sheer layer.



Madison reacted instantly—a small cry, almost a muffled moan that vibrated against his neck, hot and husky, an involuntary sound that sent an electric jolt racing down his spine.

She didn't pull away. Her body stayed pressed against his, her ragged breathing brushing his skin.

Caught in the heat of the moment, Alan left his hand there for another second… then two… Madison still wasn't reacting, as if she were frozen, lost in this forbidden contact.

He slid it a little higher, moving almost toward her crotch, his fingers grazing the inner curve of her thigh where the heat grew stronger, almost damp through the fabric.

Another small cry escaped her—a breath, a deeper stifled moan this time, almost pleading.



And then, only a moment later, or maybe just a few seconds after, it was Alan who yanked back violently, in full panic. His hand left her thigh like it had been scorched, his body jerking away sharply, heart slamming wildly in his chest, an icy dizziness tightening his throat. He had expected her to shove him away hard.

But now it was him panicking, completely lost, throat choked with a new kind of terror that twisted his insides.

Fuck, she didn't react… The thought sliced through him like a whip, gone in a fraction of a second—ice-cold and stunned with disbelief. Then his gaze dropped to Madison's face. She was burning red. Not just her cheeks—her entire face.

A fierce, feverish blush that made her skin glisten as if she'd sprinted for miles. Her lips were parted, quivering, and her eyes… her eyes carried something he couldn't quite grasp.

A hazy, heated gleam, a messy blend of deep visceral shame and something else—something darker, like coals that had been poked too hard and refused to go out. Alan swallowed hard, throat constricted.

"Madison… you okay?"



She didn't answer immediately. For two, three long seconds she remained completely still, looking dazed, staring into the empty space right next to him. Then, slowly, she turned her head. Fully. She turned away from him, shoulders rigid, her whole body shifting as if trying to create as much distance as possible without actually leaving the bed.

And suddenly her voice exploded, low but trembling with a raw mix of anger and panic: "Alan, what the fuck were you thinking?!"

The words came out choppy and shaky. She clenched her fists tight on her thighs, knuckles bone-white.

Alan felt his stomach knot painfully.

"I... I'm sorry, Madi. I went way too far. Really. I don't know what came over me, I..."

His voice broke. For a split second he even slipped out of character, the words tumbling out before he could catch them: “Madison, I’m so fucking sorry… I’ll make this right, we’ll get through it, I just… Madi, I can’t…”

He cut himself off sharply, throat tight. He was dying to tell her everything. That this was all complete bullshit. That Rebecah had been orchestrating everything from the beginning.

That the video had him by the balls and he had no fucking choice. But he couldn’t take that risk. So he added nothing more. He went quiet, shoulders slumped, eyes fixed on his trembling hands, letting the heavy silence fall back down between them like a weight.

Alan stood up with a stiff jerk, legs heavy like the floor itself was trying to drag him back down. He kept his eyes off her, shoulders slumped, voice low and sheepish, almost dead.

“I… I’m heading home, Madi.”

He took one step toward the door, all guilty and small, like a kid caught red-handed who doesn’t even dare breathe anymore. But Madison stopped him cold, hand shooting out, fingers trembling.

“Wait. Give me your keys.”

Her voice was firm, but cracked. She added, almost on autopilot: “You’ve had way too much to drink.”

Alan froze mid-step. He turned his head toward her, genuinely sincere for the first time in minutes.

“Honestly I only had two beers and…” He stopped dead.

Madison's face had just changed. That casual mention of alcohol, tossed out like some protective excuse… it suddenly dragged everything that had just happened between them right back into the open. That hand on her thigh. That cry she hadn't been able to hold back. That heat he'd felt pulsing under his fingers. Shame slammed into him all at once, raw and scorching.



He slipped straight back into character, voice too obedient, almost ashamed: "Yeah… you're probably right. Okay. I'll figure out a way home." Madison didn't answer right away. She held her hand out more insistently. He dug into his pocket, pulled out the car keys, and dropped them into her palm without a word. She closed her fingers around them tight, gripping like they were the only real thing left in that room.

She hesitated for a second. Walk him out? Drive him herself? The idea flashed through her mind, but she shoved it away instantly.

No. Not now. Not after what had just happened.

They slipped downstairs quietly, dodging stares, weaving between sweaty bodies and clinking glasses. Alan peeled off fast the moment they hit the crowded ground floor. One last sheepish glance her way, a small nod, and he vanished into the crowd. Madison rejoined her friends a few moments later. Bella and Sean were slow-dancing lazily near the makeshift bar, Larry was telling some lame joke to a girl who was already laughing way too loud. She walked up, forcing a smile that never reached her eyes.

“Alan wasn’t feeling great, he headed home.”

Larry turned, surprised.

“In the car?” Madison answered on instinct, lifting the keys still clutched in her hand.

“No…” She realized her mistake too late. Bella frowned, looking worried.

“He’s walking home and he’s not feeling well?”



Madison stammered, cheeks burning.

“Uh… he wanted… to walk… uh…”

Sean jumped in right away, shouting over the awkwardness with a loud, cheerful voice: “More beer for us then! Who’s empty?!”

The group burst out laughing, the night stumbling back on track as best it could. Madison forced herself to smile, to clink glasses, to dance a little. But the weight in her chest wouldn’t lift. She could still feel the heat of Alan’s hand on her thigh, that cry that had slipped out of her, that flicker in her own eyes she couldn’t erase.

The party dragged on for another two hours. But her mind was somewhere else. When Sean and Bella finally decided to leave, she followed without a word. In the car she pressed the keys into Sean's hand.

"Here… for Alan. Give them back to him tomorrow."

Sean nodded without asking questions. Madison sank deeper into the back seat, staring out at the night sliding past the window, heart still heavy, skin still burning where he'd touched her. The night was over, but the unease stayed right there with her.